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LETTER DATED 28 FEBRUARY 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRAQ TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter dated 27 February from Mr. Mohammed Said Al-Sahaf, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, which gives details of the spread of foot and mouth disease among Iraqi livestock. This is due to the shortage of vaccine, particularly since work in the laboratory that was producing the vaccine was halted when the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) destroyed all its equipment.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Saeed H. HASAN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Letter dated 27 February 1999 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing to draw your attention to the fact that, since the last quarter of 1998, the relevant Iraqi authorities have noted cases of foot and mouth disease in sheep and goats in a number of governorates in Iraq. The available data confirm the loss of both sheep and goats, and of newborn lambs and kids in particular, as a result of infection with this deadly disease.

Foot and mouth disease is a serious virus that normally affects cows. Records kept in Iraq since the beginning of this century show its incidence among cows. However, measures taken by the relevant Iraqi authorities, and annual vaccination against the disease, have been effective in limiting and controlling it, and there has been no previous incidence of foot and mouth in goats or sheep.

In the light of the foregoing, and with a view to limiting the current spread of this disease, the Iraqi authorities concerned have hastened to establish its incidence among livestock and to carry out a vaccination drive covering specialized dairies, State livestock projects and large populations of livestock. At the same time, audio and visual advisory programmes have been used with livestock rearers to inform them about the disease and ensure that they take the necessary steps in the case of any incidence thereof in their animals.

Sustained endeavours and the measures swiftly put in place by the Iraqi authorities in order to limit and end the spread of this disease have not had the desired effect because of the small amount of vaccine available, particularly since work in the laboratory that was producing the vaccine was halted when the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) destroyed all its equipment. The effect on preventive measures and the negative impact on animal resources have not been felt in Iraq alone, but in the whole region, since this disease spreads rapidly and could well appear in every country of the region.

This serious matter is the cause of the greatest concern to my Government, in view of its grave consequences for livestock resources and for the health of Iraqi citizens, who are currently enduring conditions of the utmost difficulty because of the continuation of the sanctions that have been imposed for nine years. The amount of vaccine entering Iraq under the memorandum of understanding signed by Iraq and the United Nations Secretariat pursuant to Security Council resolution 986 (1995) is very small, and inadequate for the numbers of livestock in the country.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) Mohammed Said AL-SAHAF
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq